

Public Affairs

Series:

GS-1035 – Public Affairs Specialist

Public Affairs Specialists in the Department of State are responsible for administering, supervising, or performing work involved in establishing and maintaining communication between the Department and the general public/media and various other pertinent publics, whether it is a domestic or foreign audience.

Positions in this series advise Department and bureau management on policy formulation and articulation as well as the potential public reaction to proposed policy. They also identify, manage and carry out the public communication requirements inherent in disseminating foreign policy decisions.

The work involves identifying communication needs and developing informational strategies, techniques, and materials that inform appropriate publics of the Department's policies, programs, services and activities. It also entails planning, executing and evaluating the effectiveness of information and communication programs in furthering Department or bureau goals.

Public affairs positions work in, and contribute to, a variety of functional

programs at the Department or bureau level. They require a practical understanding and knowledge of the policies and programs to facilitate communication between the agency and its publics on program-related problems, activities, or issues. Day-to-day program knowledge is obtained from specialists in the functional program areas or through review of DoS developed material, interviewing program specialists, or reading professional and trade publications.

Public Affairs Specialists are involved in one or more of the following functions:

- **Designing, planning, and directing or advising and implementing the public affairs program within the Department and/or a bureau:** These positions participate with management in policy formulation and articulation, advise on the potential public reaction to proposed policies, and plan, organize, implement, and evaluate communication strategies, programs and materials.
- **Developing, disseminating, and explaining information and materials to the general public or specialized target groups within a domestic or foreign setting:** These positions perform public information or education functions. They develop, disseminate, and explain information and materials to the general public or specialized target

groups and use the full range of communication methods and techniques in analyzing input from the publics for feedback to the agency's decision makers.

- **Providing information of particular value and interest to Department employees:** These positions provide informational material to agency employees concerning programs and policies.
- **Establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with all media, both foreign and domestic, and developing, disseminating and explaining information and materials to pertinent publics through the media:** These positions perform media relations and press relations activities.

Most Civil Service Public Affairs Specialist positions in the Department are assigned to the Bureau of Public Affairs, though there are some positions assigned to regional or functional bureaus. Most positions are located in the Washington, D.C. area. Due to the nature of the work, employees in this series may be required to work evenings and weekends and to travel with dignitaries domestically or abroad.

Technical Competencies

The Department's subject matter experts have identified the following specific technical competencies to assist employees and managers in determining competency levels and staff development needs.

Computer Literacy - Skilled in performing office automation functions as well as bureau and Department-specific applications. Shows ability to use computers to research internal and external sources and to communicate inside and outside the Department.

Data Gathering and Analysis - Displays knowledge of a wide variety of informational resources as well as research methods and techniques to validate, analyze, and interpret information. Demonstrates ability to gather, evaluate and interpret data to arrive at valid conclusions. Also shows ability to identify the kinds of information needed, sources of information and to draw and disseminate appropriate conclusions from conflicting data as well as to provide feedback to internal audiences.

Foreign Policy Issues - Demonstrates knowledge of U.S. foreign policy and programs, including its history, principles and underlying concepts. Displays a fundamental understanding of foreign affairs and public affairs policies and procedures as well as the roles of other

government agencies. Shows knowledge of the mission and functions of the Department and its bureaus, including its missions abroad. Also displays knowledge of recent major developments in U.S. foreign policy and the Secretary's designated priority issues.

Interagency Relations - Displays an ability to establish liaison with counterparts, analysts and officials throughout the foreign policy and intelligence communities to promote the exchange of information vital to spheres of operations. Networks and establishes working relationships with colleagues both within and outside of the Department. Interactions with colleagues and supervisors are conducted in a courteous and professional manner, demonstrating the ability to work cooperatively and effectively with other persons. Shows knowledge of the missions, roles and responsibilities of employees of the U.S. foreign affairs agencies, other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and citizens groups.

Interpersonal - Demonstrates ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with others representing opposing points of view or conflicting interests. Also shows ability to work with people having similar interests in attaining mutually positive ends.

Oral Communication - Able to make clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals and groups; listens effectively and clarifies information as needed; facilitates an open exchange of ideas and fosters an atmosphere of open communication. Displays the ability to transmit information by spoken word in structured and unstructured settings so that the intended audience comprehends the presentation. Also shows the ability to present concepts and explain points of view to audiences of differing levels of comprehension to achieve understanding of a point of view. Able to present and defend positions and negotiate differences to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

Written Communication - Demonstrates the ability to express facts and ideas by writing in a clear, succinct, convincing and organized manner. Also shows the ability to produce written information to achieve understanding among audiences of varying levels of understanding and points of view. Has knowledge of English grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Public Affairs: Basic Level

As a beginning Public Affairs Specialist, you will be assisting mid and senior level professionals in developing, clearing and disseminating public affairs materials and implementing public programs. You will also begin to develop contacts in other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and citizens groups, as well as the media.

In addition to developing your technical skills through completion of tradecraft, foreign affairs and public diplomacy courses, you will take coursework in written and oral communication, interpersonal skills, beginning end-user software applications as well as team building and leadership to increase your skills in these areas.

	Recommended Courses	Suggested Courses
Basic Level	<p>Orientation PN125 Orientation for Civil Service Employees (for new State Department employees) PS800 Cyber Security Awareness (distance learning; required to use OpenNet Plus)</p> <p>Public Affairs FSI PN113 Introduction to Working in an Embassy (classroom or distance learning) PT203 Washington Tradecraft PY113 Public Diplomacy Basics or PY114 Introduction to Public Diplomacy</p> <p>Graduate School - U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Briefing Techniques or Speaking with Confidence</p>	<p>Public Affairs FSI PY118 Managing Press and Information Programs Overseas (unit one) PY119 Managing Press and Information Programs Overseas (unit two) PY120 Managing Cultural, Educational and Exchange Programs (unit one) PY121 Managing Cultural, Educational and Exchange Programs (unit two)</p> <p>Graduate School - U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Clear Writing through Critical Thinking Writing for Results</p> <p>Non-FSI Select courses and workshops available through the following organizations. For more information, visit their websites:</p>

	Recommended Courses	Suggested Courses
Basic Level	<p>Communication/Interpersonal* PA143 Customer Service Training</p> <p>Leadership and Management** PT129 Team Building</p> <p>Information Technology* PS218 OpenNet Plus and the Internet PS432 MS Word 2003 Level One PS498 Intro to MS Outlook 2003 PS440 MS PowerPoint 2003 Level One MS Internet Explorer 5.0 End User (distance learning)*** MS Office 2000 (distance learning)***</p> <p>Recommended Rotational Assignments</p> <p>Select from among the following depending on focus:</p> <p>Bureau of Public Affairs (PA)</p> <p>PA/PRS - Office of Press Relations</p> <p>PA/RMO - Office of Press Outreach PA/PI/EI - Office of Electronic Information PA/PI/OBS - Office of Broadcasting Services Office of Public Liaison</p>	<p>Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) http://www.prsa.org</p> <p>Public Affairs Council (PAC) http://www.pac.org</p> <p>International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) http://www.iabc.net</p> <p>The National Press Club http://www.npc.press.org</p> <p>College or University Training: Courses in area of specialization</p> <p>Communication/Interpersonal* PK143 Proofreading PK146 Job Savvy: Skills for Workplace Success</p> <p>Graduate School, US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Clear Writing Through Critical Thinking</p> <p>Leadership and Management** PT251 Productively Managing Stress</p> <p>Information Technology* PS216 SIPRNet and Interlink-S PS284 Cable Express for End Users PS450 MS Access 2003 Level One PS470 MS Excel 2003 Level One</p> <p>Take some distance learning courses through FSI's FasTrac Program. For a course catalog or to enroll, visit http://fsi.state.gov/fastrac on the OpenNet.</p> <p>Suggested Developmental Activities</p> <p>Read your Bureau Performance Plan and the Department's Strategic Plan</p> <p>Read laws, regulations, and other guidance applicable to your functional area (e.g. 1 FAM, Smith-Mundt Act, Press Guidance)</p> <p>Read professional journals/magazines</p> <p>Monitor news reporting (available at www.state.gov and www.usinfo.state.gov)</p>

	Recommended Courses	Suggested Courses
Basic Level	<p>Office of Intergovernmental Affairs</p> <p>Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) ECA/A/E - Office of Academic Exchange Programs ECA/A/S - Office of Global Educational Programs ECA/PE - Office of Professional and Cultural Exchanges</p> <p>Coordinator of International Information Programs (IIP) IIP/G - Geographic Liaison IIP/T - Thematic Programs</p> <p>Assignment length varies according to needs</p>	<p>Survey trip to one or more U.S. cities</p> <p>Shadow a mid-level Public Affairs Specialist for a few days</p> <p>Visit the Career Development Resource Center</p> <p>As time permits:</p> <p>Attend DoS Press Briefings</p> <p>Attend workshops/seminars in the local area on professionally relevant topics</p> <p>Attend monthly NGO briefings and special briefings</p> <p>Attend Foreign Press Office briefings Attend Open Forum lectures</p> <p>Participate in activities of professional non-profit societies and associations</p> <p>Go on informal visits (individually or with your supervisor or co-workers) to meet counterparts in other federal agencies/ Organizations (e.g. White House, NSC, DoD, FBI, CIA, Commerce, Agriculture)</p>

*Employees who are located outside of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area may find it more cost effective to take equivalent courses from the Graduate School, USDA, colleges or universities or private vendors in their local area through the FSI External Training Program. Contact the FSI Registrar's Office at (703) 302-7145.

** For a more comprehensive list of courses, see *The Leadership and Management Training Continuum* <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/lms/docs/LMSContinuum.pdf>.

*** Distance Learning Courses. For more information, visit <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/sait/dl.asp>.

Public Affairs: Mid-Level

As a mid-level Public Affairs Specialist, you will continue to support higher graded mid and senior level professionals, while you also work independently to develop, clear and disseminate public affairs materials and implement public programs. Your portfolio will expand and you will also increase your networking and contacts with other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, citizens groups and increase your technical skills and

knowledge of foreign affairs by taking courses in area studies, regional or functional issues as well as public diplomacy.

You will also need to increase your proficiency in desktop software applications by taking intermediate and advanced courses. Since you may assume team leadership or supervisory responsibility, additional course work in human resource management, communication, supervision and management are also recommended.

	Recommended Courses	Suggested Courses
Mid-Level (See also course at earlier levels if not taken yet)	Public Affairs FSI PP204 Congressional Relations PP212 Intelligence and Foreign Policy PP510 Global Issues PP521 International Terrorism: Threat and Response PY118 Managing Press and Information Programs Overseas (unit one) PY119 Managing Press and Information Programs Overseas (unit two) PY230 New Trends in Public Diplomacy	Public Affairs FSI PP219 Legislative Affairs Orientation PP507 Human Rights in the Foreign Policy PY120 Managing Cultural, Educational and Exchange Programs (unit one) PY121 Managing Cultural, Educational and Exchange Programs (unit two) PY125 Managing Fulbright Programs PY128 IIP Programs, Products and Services PY220 Introduction to Grants and Cooperative Agreements (distance learning) Non-FSI Select courses and workshops available through the following organizations. For more information, visit their websites: Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) http://www.prsa.org Public Affairs Council (PAC) http://www.pac.org International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) http://www.iabc.net

	Recommended Courses	Suggested Courses
Mid-Level (See also course at earlier levels if not taken yet)	<p>Communication/Interpersonal*</p> <p>PA123 Managing Customer Service PD520 Visual Aid Basics PY126 Speechwriting and Presentation Skills</p> <p>Graduate School, US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Advanced Briefing Techniques</p> <p>Leadership and Management**</p> <p>PK245 Basic Leadership Skills** PK246 Employee Relations PT107 EEO/Diversity Awareness for Managers and Supervisors PT215 Team Leadership Workshop PT216 Seven Habits of Highly Effective People PT253 Negotiation Skills For Managers</p> <p>Information Technology*</p> <p>PS280 Introduction to MS Project 2000 PS433 MS Word 2003 Level Two PS441 MS PowerPoint 2003 Level Two MS Office 2000 (distance learning)*** Microsoft Project 2003 (distance learning)*** Microsoft Visio 2000 (distance learning)***</p>	<p>The National Press Club http://www.npc.press.org</p> <p>College or University Training: Courses in area of specialization</p> <p>Communication/Interpersonal*</p> <p>PK143 Proofreading</p> <p>Leadership and Management**</p> <p>PT205 Performance Management Seminar PT206 Managing Change PT208 Managing State Projects PT211 Coaching PT212 Creative Problem PT214 Managing Conflict Productively PT217 Running Effective Meetings Workshop PT218 Leading in a Diverse Workforce PT251 Productively Managing Stress PT252 Managing Up: Working Effectively with Your Manager</p> <p>Information Technology*</p> <p>PS216 SIPRNet and Interlink-S PS284 Cable Express for End Users PS451 MS Access 2003 Level Two PS471 MS Excel 2000 Level Two PY129 Microsoft Applications for Public Diplomacy Officers</p> <div> <p>Take some distance learning courses through FSI's FasTrac Program. For a course catalog or to enroll, visit http://fsi.state.gov/fastrac on the OpenNet.</p> </div>

	Recommended Courses	Suggested Courses
<p>Mid-Level</p> <p>(See also course at earlier levels if not taken yet)</p>	<p>Recommended Rotational Assignments</p> <p>Select from among the following depending on focus:</p> <p>Bureau of Public Affairs (PA) PA/PRS - Office of Press Relations PA/RMP - Office of Press Outreach Foreign Press Office PA/PI/EI - Office of Electronic Information PA/PI/OBS - Office of Broadcasting Services Office of Public Liaison Office of Intergovernmental Affairs</p> <p>Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) ECA/A/E - Office of Academic Exchange Programs ECA/A/S - Office of Global Educational Programs ECA/PE - Office of Professional and Cultural Exchanges</p> <p>Coordinator of International Information Programs (IIP) IIP/G - Geographic Liaison IIP/T - Thematic Programs</p> <p>Embassy Rotation</p> <p>Bureau Public Affairs Office</p> <p>Bureau Executive Office</p> <p>Assignment length varies according to needs</p>	<p>Suggested Developmental Activities</p> <p>Read your Bureau Performance Plan and the Department's Strategic Plan</p> <p>Read laws, regulations, and other guidance applicable to your functional area (e.g. 1 FAM, Smith-Mundt Act, Press Guidance)</p> <p>Read professional journals/magazines</p> <p>Monitor news reporting (available at www.state.gov and www.usinfo.state.gov)</p> <p>Survey trip to one or more U.S. cities</p> <p>Shadow a senior level Public Affairs Specialist for a few days</p> <p>Travel as Press Advance for Secretary of State, either domestic or abroad</p> <p>Travel as Press Liaison with Secretary of State</p> <p>Travel as Public Affairs Advance Assistant with Secretary</p> <p>Volunteer for a Departmental Task Force</p> <p>Visit the Career Development Resource Center</p> <p>Apply for a Career Development Program such as the USDA Executive Leadership Program for Mid-Level Employees or a Congressional Fellowship****</p> <p>Apply for a long-term training opportunity or an OPM Residential Seminar****</p> <p>Apply for the Civil Service to Foreign Service Hard-to-Fill Program, a TDY, or excursion tour to an overseas embassy or consulate****</p>

	Recommended Courses	Suggested Courses
Mid-Level (See also course at earlier levels if not taken yet)		As time permits: Attend DoS Press Briefings Attend workshops/seminars in the local area on professionally relevant topics Attend monthly NGO briefings and special briefings Attend Foreign Press Office briefings Attend Open Forum lectures Participate in activities of professional non-profit societies and associations Go on informal visits (individually or with your supervisor or co-workers) to meet counterparts in other federal agencies/Organizations (e.g. White House, NSC, DoD, FBI, CIA, Commerce, Agriculture)

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** For a more comprehensive list of courses, see *The Leadership and Management Training Continuum* <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/lms/docs/LMSContinuum.pdf>. Please note that PK245, Basic Leadership Skills, is a mandatory course for GS-13 employees.

*** Distance Learning Courses. For more information, visit <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/sait/dl.asp>.

**** More information follows after this section on *Training for Specific Series and Job Functions*

Public Affairs: Senior Level

As a senior level Public Affairs Specialist, you will be articulating positions and advising top Department managers on the public affairs implications of foreign policy decisions. The ability to foresee the implications of proposed policies and gaining consensus becomes critical. You will be managing public programs and the

dissemination of information to domestic and foreign audiences.

In addition to networking extensively with contacts in other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, citizens groups and the media, you may also interact with Congress. Thus course work in advanced leadership and management is essential.

	Recommended Courses	Suggested Courses
Senior Level (See also course at earlier levels if not taken yet)	Public Affairs FSI PY127 Dealing with Print and Electronic Media PY230 New Trends in Public Diplomacy Communication/Interpersonal* PY126 Speechwriting and Presentation Skills Graduate School, US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Advanced Briefing Techniques Leadership and Management** PT133 Senior Executive Threshold Seminar ** PT207 Intermediate Leadership Skills** PT210 Advanced Leadership Skills** PT213 Starting Right: A Seminar for Program Directors PT221 Four Roles of Leadership PT224 Influence By Design	Public Affairs Non-FSI Select courses and workshops available through the following organizations. For more information, visit their websites: Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) http://www.prsa.org Public Affairs Council (PAC) http://www.pac.org International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) http://www.iabc.net The National Press Club http://www.npc.press.org Communication/Interpersonal* PY240 Facing the Cameras Leadership and Management** PD529 Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement (distance learning) PT209 Executive Overview to Managing State Projects PT218 Leading In A Diverse Workforce

	Recommended Courses	Suggested Courses
Senior Level (See also course at earlier levels if not taken yet)	<p>For GS-15 and above:</p> <p>PT300 Leader as Facilitator PT301 Appearing Effective in the Media PT302 Testifying Before Congress PT303 Crisis Leadership PT304 Deputy Assistant Secretary as Leader PT305 Executive as Coach and Mentor</p> <p>Information Technology* Courses not taken at the Mid Level as desired</p> <p>Recommended Rotational Assignments</p> <p>Select from among the following depending on focus:</p> <p>Other Government Agency (e.g. DoD, White House, USAID, Commerce, Agriculture, NSA, FBI, CIA, CDC)</p> <p>Bureau of Resource Management</p> <p>Bureau of Human Resource Management</p> <p>Assignment length varies according to needs</p>	<p>General Services Administration (GSA) STAR (Strategic and Tactical Advocates for IT Results) - A one-week residential seminar focusing on program and project management, leadership, security, technology, government and capital planning.</p> <p>Information Technology* Courses not taken at the Mid Level as desired</p> <div> <p>Take some distance learning courses through FSI's FasTrac Program. For a course catalog or to enroll, visit http://fsi.state.gov/fastrac on the OpenNet.</p> </div> <p>Suggested Developmental Activities</p> <p>Volunteer for a Departmental Task Force</p> <p>Apply for a Career Development Program such as the USDA Executive Potential Program, a Congressional Fellowship, or the Council for Excellence in Government Fellows Program***</p> <p>Apply for a long-term training opportunity or an OPM Residential Seminar***</p> <p>Apply for the Civil Service to Foreign Service Hard-to Fill Program, a TDY, or excursion tour to an overseas embassy or consulate***</p>

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** For a more comprehensive list of courses, see *The Leadership and Management Training Continuum* <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/lms/docs/LMSContinuum.pdf>. Please note that PT207, Intermediate Leadership Skills, is a mandatory course for GS-14 employees. PT210, Advanced Leadership Skills, is a mandatory course for GS-15 employees. PT133 Senior Executive Threshold Seminar is a mandatory course for new Senior Executive Service (SES) employees.

*** More information follows after this section on *Training for Specific Series and Job Functions*

